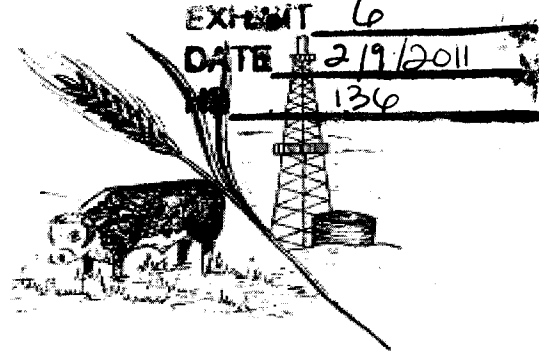


# PONDERA COUNTY

20 4<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE S.W.

CONRAD, MONTANA 59425



Chairman Reichner, Members of the Committee, for the record, we are Pondera County Commissioners, Joseph Christiaens, Sandra Broesder, and Cynthia Johnson and we are very much opposed to HB 136 because of the impacts to our constituent property taxpayers.

While the fiscal note for HB 316 indicates an increased burden on Montana property taxpayers of ONLY \$6,000,000, the fiscal note does NOT address the real impact, in the very near future once those school districts which have reserves have exhausted those reserves. The fiscal note should absolutely be expanded to four years or so in the future, when the impact to Montana property taxpayers could easily exceed \$41,500,000. The difference is significant and will represent an unreasonable shift in financial responsibility for Montana's education system.

The most important reason for our disgust with this bill is the fact, regardless of which fiscal information you rely on, Agriculture and the Timber industry bear the biggest brunt of the proposed tax increases. These two backbone industries of Montana already sustain the largest share of school funding. This bill adds insult to injury to our tax paying producers.

While we agree that belts need to be tightened, expenses cut, and services delivered in a more efficient manner, we do not agree that Property Tax increases are the direction to go. Please Vote DO NOT PASS on HB 136.

Sincerely,  
Pondera County Commissioners

Cynthia A. Johnson, Chair

Joseph Christiaens, Vice-Chair

Sandra J. Broesder